

Eat Out Without Pigging Out

The hardest part of staying on a healthy New Year diet starts when you step outside your front door. Eating away from home is the downfall of many committed healthy eaters because most restaurant menus feature high-fat, supersize meals. And those eateries that do offer low-cal alternatives often are more expensive.

So here are 10 money-saving strategies for eating healthy when you're away from home:

Before you go to lunch or dinner, eat a light snack. A piece of fruit or some veggies will take the edge off any hunger pangs and give you the energy to make sensible choices when choosing where and what to eat. If you wait until you are ravenous, you're more likely to settle for fast food, order too much or gobble down breadsticks while you wait.

Avoid ordering anything with the title "supersize" or "value meal" or "combo." Choose regular-size sandwiches and spend any leftover cash on a piece of fruit for dessert.

Ask your waiter to hold the chips and salsa or bread and butter until your meal is served. Save your appetite for the main course.

Order a vegetable soup or salad for starters. Like strategy No. 1, you'll satisfy your hunger pains and be filling up on something healthy before you get a chance to eat something else.

Have an appetizer as your entrée. The portion sizes for appetizers are often sufficient to fill you up, and you'll save money.

Split an entrée with a friend. In many restaurants, a main course with an extra side is plenty of food for two.

Plan to have leftovers. Order with the intention of taking half home with you for another meal.

Ask your server to keep dressings, sauces and toppings on the side. You can get the flavors you want without the extra fat and calories.

Share one dessert with everyone at the table. Your sweet tooth can be satisfied with just a bite or two.

Cancel your membership to the Clean Plate Club. Your stomach should tell you how much to eat, not the cooks at the restaurant. So listen carefully and stop eating

when your stomach says “FULL.”
—adapted from *The Billings Gazette*